

# Wisconsin Working Families Party: Congratulates Milwaukee School Board winners

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New members create a progressive majority on the MPS Board of Directors

Board to strengthen and fund public education; hold ineffective charter programs and operators accountable

MILWAUKEE — Wisconsin Working Families Party congratulates its winning slate of public school advocates for the Milwaukee Board of School Directors. Today's winners, along with current Board members, create a strong majority of pro-public school advocates who will work to bolster public schools and fight back against privatization. The political powerhouse created a strategy to take back the school board, recruiting and supporting candidates, as well as engaging activists in doorknocking, texting, and phone calls for the campaigns. Wisconsin Working Families Party recruited and trained a campaign staffer to run the campaigns of the winners, coordinating a winning strategy that will profoundly affect the decision making for how MPS budget priorities are set and how private charter schools will be held accountable.

The winners are Bob Peterson (Member at Large), Erika Siemsen (who defeated incumbent Wendell J. Harris in District 2), Sequanna Taylor (District 3), and Megan O'Halloran (District 8). Along with current Board members, who were supported by Working Families Party in 2017, WFP-backed public school advocates now have the majority on the nine member Board. Community activist Marva Herndon has a small lead in District 1 and is the likely winner pending a possible recount.

"Today, the tide of national public education activism swept Milwaukee, with candidates backed by Working Families Party activists, union educators, movement allies, and grassroots voters winning a decisive pro-public education majority on the Milwaukee Board of School Directors," said Rebecca Lynch, deputy director of Wisconsin Working Families Party. "Tonight's victories come on the heels of the historic defeat of Scott Walker by Governor Tony Evers and WI WFP

leader Lieutenant Governor Mandela Barnes. In back-to-back elections, Wisconsin voters have demanded that our elected leaders defend and fund public education and put an end to corrosive school privatization.”

“We need leaders who are going to speak up and out for the betterment of our schools — and that’s who ran and won on the Working Families Party slate for Milwaukee Board of School Directors this election night,” said WI WFP Co-Chair and Milwaukee County Supervisor Marcelia Nicholson. “These are fighters, who are going to fight — and I mean knowledgeably fight — to dismantle the status quo, protect our public schools, and stop the attack on MPS students. For myself and the many WFP members and activists across Milwaukee who called, texted, organized, donated, and knocked thousands of doors to elect these public education champions, our work is just beginning — and we won’t rest until MPS students have the education and support they deserve.”

“I have been so honored to have the Working Families Party back my campaign and guide me along the way,” said Erika Siemsen, who unseated corporate-backed Wendell Harris in District 2. “Working Families Party members and activists work so hard to improve the lives of everyone in our city. They saw the possibilities for making large scale community change via this election. Their strategy and vision will benefit the families I’ve been elected to serve.”

“MTEA members are the guardians of public education in Milwaukee, and we are proud to partner with Working Families Party to ensure that we have the public schools our students deserve,” said MTEA President Amy Mizialko. “When public school workers come together with other progressives who understand the importance of public education, our students and our entire community win.”

Wisconsin — and Milwaukee in particular — has long been a laboratory for schemes that wick public dollars from public schools to fund ill-conceived and unsuccessful private education models, including charter schools and vouchers. Since 1990, when vouchers were launched in Milwaukee (and expanded statewide in 2011 by former governor Scott Walker), [student outcomes in the private programs have barely differed from public schools](#). What voucher and charter programs have accomplished is enriching private operators, abolishing workplace rights for teachers and other school personnel, discriminating against special needs students, muting the voices of parents and other community members, and creating a separate but unequal system of providing education to Milwaukee’s students.

Now in its third year of operations in the state, Wisconsin Working Families Party has proven to be a potent and effective political operation. In the 2018 election cycle, the Party ran one of the largest volunteer operations in Wisconsin engaging activists and volunteers from all walks of life in texting, phone banking, rallying, and door knocking for Tony Evers and WI WFP board member Mandela Barnes. Wisconsin Working Families Party was also key in the successful elections of Milwaukee sheriff Earnell Lucas and several state legislators, including Robyn Vining (District 14), the only Democratic challenger to flip an Assembly seat from red to blue.